



UNITED STATES SENATOR ★ SERVING THE CITIZENS OF IDAHO

LARRY CRAIG

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NEWS RELEASE

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Trees for Tots **by Senator Larry Craig**

“Clear-cuts for kids.” That is what the national environmental activists dubbed the bill Senator Wyden and I introduced in 1999. It was a compromise proposal to help timber-dependent communities cope with the dramatic decline in timber harvesting from our federal lands.

I can still remember the day back in 1999, when Senator Ron Wyden and I sat down to hammer out an outline of what became the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000. Folks in Idaho know it as Craig-Wyden.

We crossed the political aisle and many ideological boundaries and found common ground to solve a problem. It was a true compromise because neither side got everything they wanted, but we could all agree on one thing – it looked like it just might work.

The law has achieved remarkable results. Not only did it help local communities fund schools and maintain roads, it is the one and only time in history that local, collaborative groups have had a checkbook enabling them to directly choose and fund projects on our national forests. It is these Resource Advisory Committees (RACs) that helped shape Craig-Wyden into the success we see today.

That law expired last fall; it was a six-year temporary safety net. It is clear to me that the safety net payments need to continue, but in a manner that encourages and focuses on building collaboration - - one of the cornerstones of this Act.

As the time has passed to reauthorize the law, we have a new compromise. Once again, we had differences in opinions about how the law should be shaped for the future. However, the foundation for the compromise was shaped by discussions I had with Senator Bingaman earlier this year. In the end, a large, bipartisan group of senators came together and agreed to put aside our differences in order to ensure success for our rural schools and counties.

Our new bipartisan compromise, which the Senate voted 74-23 to include as part of the FY2007 Emergency Supplemental Appropriations bill, incorporates the successful principles of the original Act. It recognizes the fact that communities want economic activity more than a check; the formula needs to be more equitable to be passed by Congress; and the greatest achievement of the original law was as much about the RACs as the safety net payments.

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While the fate of the FY2007 Emergency Supplemental has yet to be determined, I will continue working for a successful outcome for our timber-dependent schools and counties.

As I look back over the past six years, I couldn't be prouder of the accomplishments we have seen from this law.

I can't wait to see what the next six years bring with the new law. One thing I know for sure – there won't be any "clear-cuts for kids."